



TOWN OF FRAMINGHAM FINANCE COMMITTEE

Memorial Building
150 Concord Street
Framingham, MA 01702

FY 2011 Strategic Work Plan:

- I. Core Principles**
- II. Goals and Objectives**
- III. Preliminary Schedule**

Linda Dunbrack, Chairman
Daniel Lampl, Vice Chair
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I. Core principles

The Finance Committee has relied on these core principles when making recommendations. In the past, they have often formed the basis for agreement and consensus on difficult issues, even when members have divergent viewpoints on these issues.

- A.** The Town should ensure that financial information is available and presented in a manner that is financially transparent to build accountability to taxpayers and public confidence in Town government.
- B.** The Town should plan strategically for the long-term financial health of the Town to provide a foundation for 1) promoting long-term stability in all Town services and 2) mitigating the impact of economic downturns and significant unforeseen expenses.
- C.** The Town's budget should provide services in response to specific community needs that are both cost efficient and high-quality.
- D.** The Town should seek equity and fairness in total compensation with collective bargaining units, balancing the interests of employees and taxpayers with due consideration given to economic and financial realities.
- E.** The Town should maximize efficiency and effectiveness in the use of its fixed assets, including real property and equipment.
- F.** The Town should explore available options for increasing revenue without overburdening taxpayers, including but not limited to property tax collection, local aid, investment income, user fees, and grants.

II. Goals and Objectives

"What does the Finance Committee plan to do in the course of its work to advance its core principles in the current fiscal year?"

A. *The Finance Committee shall promote increased financial transparency by:*

1. Ensuring that Finance Committee deliberations are as transparent as possible, including:
 - a) *Complying aggressively with Open Meeting Law,*
 - b) *Memorializing the content of deliberations in minutes, position summaries and reports, and*
 - c) *Providing votes on recommendations to Town Meeting that are clear both in process and reflecting the intent of the committee.*
2. Requesting that key financial information be posted on the Town and/or School Department web sites

Implementation Plan:

- A1a. Review questions about compliance with Open Meeting Law with Town Clerk and Town Counsel as needed
- A1b. Memorialize positions by:
 - Summarizing key points of discussions and key information about votes, before moving onto the next topic
 - Minute review process Chair and Vice Chair
 - Draft, review and approve positions on long-term financial issues
 - Committee review and approval of (as much as possible) statements to Town Meeting on positions
- A1c. Adopt standard operating conventions same conventions in making motions to make it easier for the Clerk to document and easier to explain to Town meeting.
- A2. Identify financial information that should be readily available to the public

- A2. Request a monthly oral financial exception report based on the “run rate” for divisions.

B. *The Finance Committee shall consider issues and provide recommendations that support the long-term financial health of the Town and reflect best practices, including:*

1. Addressing structural problems in the operating budget,
2. Boosting adequate reserves levels,
3. Financing unfunded liabilities,
4. Supporting revenue-generating commercial development,
5. Investing in capital projects based on a thoughtful and prudent long-term plan, and
6. Developing long-term plans for utilizing town-owned buildings based on needs and on the projected impact on the operating and capital budgets.

Implementation Plan:

- B1 Provide information and recommendations to the Structural Deficit Task Force
- B2-5. Develop position papers on at least 3 of the above topics that include:
 - background and introductory information,
 - analysis of current practices and comparison with best practices from the MA Department of Revenue, Association of Town Finance Committees, and other sources,
 - Finance Committee recommendations
- B1-5. Integrate recommendations into reports to Town Meeting and other bodies as appropriate
- B1-5. Evaluate alternatives for disseminating the information and recommendations to the public, including development of a Finance Committee web page

C. The Finance Committee shall evaluate opportunities for improved cost-efficiency of municipal and educational services, including:

1. Request information about potential cost-savings opportunities, including:
 - a) *Outsourcing services, or conversely, by doing something in-house that is currently contracted,*
 - b) *Regionalizing services with other Towns,*
 - c) *Analyzing and minimizing liability risks,*
 - d) *Consolidating and increased sharing of personnel resources among municipal divisions and within the School Department,*
 - e) *Consolidating and increased sharing of personnel resources between the School Department and municipal government, and*
 - f) *Changing delivery of services to meet legal mandate or obligation, public safety, public health, or accreditation requirement in a more cost-efficient way.*
2. Discretionary programs and services
 - a) *Analyzing relative costs and benefits to the Town, both in the short-term and long-term, of services, programs, and operating expenses that are NOT directly related to legal mandate or obligation, public safety, public health, or accreditation,*
 - b) *Substituting a position with one with a lower classifications, and reducing the associated duties as appropriate, and*
 - c) *Benchmarking staffing/unit of service in comparison with other municipalities.*

Implementation Plan:

- C1-3 Use comparable criteria to assess and analyze all services to the extent it is possible,
- C1-3 Identify areas of interest in each division
- C1-3 Develop division-specific questions to guide analysis and focus the answers in areas of interest
- C1f Develop questions for Town Manager to focus on potential efficiencies across the divisions
- C1g Develop questions for Town Manager/School Department to focus on potential efficiencies across the Town
- C1h/2a Develop criteria for analyzing the full financial impact related to school choice and program placement in comparison to other options
- C2 Identify potential areas of interest in municipal divisions and School Department and develop questions for division heads, Town manager, and Superintendent as appropriate

D. The Finance Committee shall promote equity and fairness in total compensation with collective bargaining units, with due consideration given to economic and financial realities.

1. Analyze the impact of each collective bargaining agreement on FY12 budget
2. Benchmark total compensation of all collective bargaining units with comparable communities
3. Analyze criteria for eligibility for health care benefits

Implementation Plan:

- D1 Request an electronic copy of each contract for reference and for development of criteria for analyzing their financial impact
- D1 Request a separate analysis of the impact each collective bargaining agreement on FY12 budget and benchmarking data
- D3 Request a report from CFO regarding eligibility for health care benefits

- D1-3. Integrate findings into all reports to Town Meeting and other bodies as appropriate

E. The Finance Committee evaluate opportunities maximize efficiency and cost-effectiveness in the use of its fixed assets, including real property and equipment.

1. Request information about potential cost-savings opportunities:

a) Consolidating and increased sharing of resources, including equipment and facilities among municipal divisions and within the School Department,

b) Consolidating and increased sharing of equipment and facilities between the School Department and municipal government,

c) Investing in technology or applying existing technology in new ways, and

d) Investing in capital equipment that could reduce operating costs.

2. Encourage strategic planning with regard to Town-owned buildings, including:

a) An inventory that includes location, age, condition, cost to maintain, cost to operate (including energy), warranties,

b) Current and potential uses of buildings, given constraints on capacity, design, parking, etc.,

c) Current and projected needs for buildings, anticipating changes in policy and community needs, and

d) Renting or leasing opportunities for underutilized buildings or facilities to increase income or reduce operating expenses for the Town.

Implementation Plan:

- E1a,b Identify areas of interest in each division, and develop division-specific questions to guide analysis and focus the answers in areas of interest
- E1c Develop questions for Town Manager to focus on potential efficiencies across the divisions
- E1d Develop questions for Town Manager/School Department to focus on potential efficiencies across the Town

F. The Finance Committee shall evaluate available options for increasing revenue without overburdening taxpayers

1. Evaluate whether additional revenues could be generated by charging consumers for the use of services that currently are free
2. Evaluate whether rental fees cover the full cost of the use of a facility, including heat, utilities, custodial and maintenance services, and relevant overhead costs
3. Evaluate the extent to which user fees to cover the full costs of related services, including employee benefits, building/facility use and overhead, and
4. Evaluate the extent to which fees and/or grants cover the costs of programs they support, including how much of the total program costs come from some area of the general fund operating budget

Implementation Plan:

- F1 and F2 Identify areas of interest in each division, and develop division-specific questions to guide analysis and focus the answers in areas of interest

III. Schedule

December 14, 2010: Budget Summit with Board of Selectman and School Committee

December 15, 2010: Regularly scheduled FINCOM meeting

January 5, 2011: FINCOM Meeting to Review Special Town Meeting Article (s)/CFO Retirement Presentation

January 11, 2011: Probable date for Special Town Meeting to consider land acquisition and design for branch library

January 19, 2011: Regularly scheduled FINCOM Meeting (School Department—pending availability)

February 2, 2011: CFO Capital Budget Recommendations to Capital Budget Committee (90 days before Town Meeting)

February 16, 2011: Regular Meeting

February 21-25: School vacation week

March 1, 2011: CFO Operating Budget Recommendations to Finance Committee (60 days before Town Meeting)

March 2, 2011: CFO Budget Presentation Review

March 9, 2011: Budget Review

March 16, 2011: Budget Review

March 23, 2011: Budget Review

March 30, 2011: Budget Review

April 6, 2011: Budget/Article Review (Elections on 5th)

April 13, 2011: Budget/Article Review

April 18-22, 2011: School Vacation Week, report to Town Meeting due, Passover and Holy Week

April 26, 2011: Annual Town Meeting begins

- FINCOM meetings: booked at 7 all TM nights in case needed
- Attendance at Town Meeting: based on anticipated need

June 2011: Self-evaluation with respect to work plan